

Supporting Persons Displaced by the Russian War against Ukraine in Europe One Year after the Full-scale Russian Invasion

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party convening in Stockholm, Sweden, on 26-28 May 2023:

Notes that:

- in 2022, European communities have shown incredible generosity and swiftness in responding to the largest flow of displaced persons since World War II: according to the UNHCR, there are now more than 8 million Ukrainians displaced by the Russian war of aggression in Europe, with around 90% of them being women and children [1];
- Ukrainian government has set out a key objective to establish favourable conditions in Ukraine to ensure the safe return of all persons displaced by the Russian genocidal war, and until this happens, host communities must be a welcome place for Ukrainian citizens;
- in March 2022, the European Union unanimously adopted the Temporary Protection Directive to assist Ukrainians displaced by the Russian war of aggression by providing them with residence permits and access to employment, care, and housing. However, EU countries differ in how they practically implement the Directive;
- UNHCR survey data up to mid-March 2023 suggests that 36% of displaced Ukrainian respondents were currently employed: 60% were employed before the Russian war of aggression displaced them [2];
- Ukrainian displaced persons are able to contribute to host economies. ECB and University of Tartu data show that Estonia, which has the highest percentage of displaced Ukrainians in the euro area, benefits from 55% of them having entered the workforce and paying taxes in in-demand fields such as manufacturing, construction, trade, and service sector [3]. At the same time, only 0.47% of all Estonian benefits went to displaced Ukrainians as temporary protection between March 2022 and mid-February 2023 [4];
- according to ECB, women make up over 73% of working age population of displaced Ukrainians between ages 18 and 64 [3], are mostly highly educated or have a degree [2], but at the same time, are at risk of ending up in unskilled, undeclared, or illegal work, such as forced labour, sexual exploitation, illegal surrogacy, forced begging, and forced criminality;

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- the language barrier hinders social cohesion between host and displaced people communities, and some states do not offer a centralised information source accessible to people without local language knowledge, as well as have a lack of social workers and translators in places where displaced people reside, making it difficult for displaced people to navigate the local bureaucracy and effectively integrate into the labour market;
- the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reiterates that migrant smuggling and human trafficking can be prevented by giving displaced people legal status, access to essential services, employment, and education;
- Norwegian Refugee Council's survey indicates that even in Ukraine's most welcoming neighbouring countries, 7 out of 10 displaced people risk falling into poverty, and government and humanitarian assistance as the only form of income is not sustainable [5].

Believes that:

- more than one year after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it must be clear that Russia is solely responsible for this war and the toll it takes on the world;
- the response to the humanitarian crisis as a consequence of Russia's war against Ukraine has shown that Europe can react swiftly and support local decision-making, which are the keys to the effective reception of displaced people, and they must become an example for current and future crises;
- displaced Ukrainians deserve respect for their human rights and dignity, as enshrined in Article 3 of the Articles of Association of ALDE and in the declaration of human rights;
- we must ensure that every displaced Ukrainian can safely come back home by helping Ukraine achieve the quickest possible victory, and until then, displaced Ukrainians should be able to participate in the European economy and culture to our common benefit as a cohesion-building measure in Ukraine's integration into the EU. Addressing the needs of women with children is crucial in that regard;
- all working-age displaced persons should have the ability to apply for positions that match their qualifications so that they have a chance to get safe, legal, and gainful employment and avoid de-skilling;
- children have an innate need for socialisation, play, and discovery to grow up as well-developed and active members of our democratic European family, which Ukraine is a part of, and we should strive to address these needs;
- displaced Ukrainians in Europe should rest assured of the equal commitment to the Rule of Law and protection of human life in both their home and host country, and continuous effort is needed

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to ensure that displaced Ukrainians, especially women and girls, do not end up a victim of human trafficking, sexual abuse, or discrimination.

Calls for the ALDE Party and its member organisations to:

- foster adult education initiatives, including community-based ones, with flexible course options that meet the needs of older people and women with children, in particular, to increase local language knowledge among displaced Ukrainians, with a goal of at least half of every European host country population of displaced Ukrainians studying the local language by the end of 2023;
- ensure government information is made accessible and understandable for displaced Ukrainians in all countries where they are present, including via developing resources in Ukrainian or English where absent, to boost their self-sufficiency in navigating the bureaucracy of social welfare and job opportunities;
- achieve greater formal skill recognition among displaced persons, especially in the fields that experience labour shortages, to allow them to obtain safe and skilled employment: language barrier should not rid hard work of due recognition in 2023;
- in cooperation with local and Ukrainian authorities, continue developing efficient childcare services and flexible schooling options for children;
- support and finance organisations that provide emotional and psychological support, especially for children;
- in cooperation with Ukrainian embassies, consulates, diaspora, and local communities, develop perception campaigns about the Russian aggression, and host activities to foster resilience against Russian disinformation, anti-refugee narratives, and right-wing populist rhetoric, so that Russian responsibility for the war and its consequences is known to the vast majority of citizens in each European state;
- provide sufficient funding to grassroots organisations and women's networks that help displaced people;
- call on local law enforcement to enhance coordination and information exchange between Europol, Interpol, and the Ukrainian agencies on associated jurisdictional activity, inter alia human trafficking, gender-based violence, and discrimination;
- work with local authorities to set up more flexible systems that would allow people displaced by the Russian war of aggression to more equally spread across the country to areas with more available housing and to boost local markets with a skilled workforce;
- appeal to EU institutions to facilitate Ukraine's frictionless and swift integration into the EU single market with a view of early

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- opening of Ukraine's EU accession negotiations by the end of this year;
- resolve to ensure sufficient relevant data are collected on a national level to inform further evidence-driven policy decisions, especially on local language knowledge among displaced persons and their contribution to the local economy.

Footnotes:

[1] Operational Data Portal – Ukraine Refugee Situation. UNHCR. https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.228732760.514168680.1646989952-176134281.1646551413

[2] Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine. UNHCR. <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoizjYwMDFhMzMtMTJjZS00NzU1LTkzYzgtNTNhN2FiNjU3Y2RlIiwidCI6ImU1YzM3OTgxLTY2NjQtNDZzNC04YTBlLTY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIslmMiOjh9>

[3] Integrating Ukrainian refugees into the euro area labour market. European Central Bank. <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/blog/date/2023/html/ecb.blog.230301-3bb24371c8.en.html>

[4] Professor: No doubt Ukrainian refugees are benefitting Estonian economy. ERR. <https://news.err.ee/1608889427/professor-no-doubt-ukrainian-refugees-are-benefitting-estonian-economy>

[5] Seven out of ten refugees from Ukraine risk falling into poverty in neighbouring countries | NRC. (February 23, 2023). <https://www.nrc.no/news/2023/february/ukraine-refugee-survey/>

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